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that represented by Class VII should be instituted to test the proficiency of the students in the Vernacular.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

114. The desirability of introducing into the Education Code some provision that will have the effect of prohibiting the admission, into the Secondary Schools of the State, of boys who are married.

Mr. K. G. Sesha Iyer, B. A. & B. L. (Member, Nominated) said that, at the third session of the Assembly, he had the privilege of moving the subject of free and compulsory primary education, and though the reply then elicited was unsympathetic, he was glad that primary education was now made completely free and almost compulsory. To some, the present subject might at first sight seem fantastic. The Education Department also might not perhaps like to have anything to do with reference to it. As regards the Hindu public, especially the Brahmin community, he thought that the subject would have been more acceptable to them if only he had slightly modified it and proposed that the admission to the Secondary Schools should be restricted to *married* boys as, in that case, the difficulty felt by the Brahmin father in procuring a husband for his daughter and the payment of *vara-sulka* would not confront them. On the contrary, the marriage problem, which was such a thorn now, would then get very easily solved, and it was perhaps likely that, instead of *vara-sulka* or bridegroom's price, *kannia-sulka* would come to be demanded. But he was not satisfied that the subject would have the effect of creating any difficulty in respect of the marriage question by accentuating the tendency for demanding the bridegroom's price.

As regards the educational aspect of the question, it was his conviction that, though just at present the question might seem queer, the time would soon come when the Education Department would have to face it squarely. During the last two years the question had been taken up for discussion both in the papers and on the platform, and a great deal had been said both by the Hindus and non-Hindus about the peculiar feature of Indian education, namely, that, in High Schools where the boys were below 16 years of age, a large number of the students, especially Brahmins, were seen to be married. The Member learnt from the statistics collected by him that that was really the case. In England, it would not be possible to come across any instance of a boy of 14 being married, certainly not when he was a student, though under the law such a marriage was valid. It might be seriously questioned how the Education Department could remedy a *social* vice like that or the Government interfere in such a matter. He said his answer was that all questions relating to national efficiency had to be solved by the Government and means had to be devised by them by which national efficiency or national fitness could be maintained for national ends. The very first step to social reform was admittedly education, and as the character of the reform depended on the form of the education, the Educational Department, more than any other department of the State, had to devise the means to keep up the national fitness or national efficiency, so that all the boys of the State, in whatever walk of life they might be placed, might be able to discharge their national function to the best advantage of the State. That duty of the State would become more obvious if it be remembered that the theory of national life associated with the twentieth century was that organisation and intelligence in every department of work was indispensable for national existence. Any disinterested observer would, so far as the Brahmin community was concerned, have seen that,

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far from maintaining a high degree of national fitness, they were on the high road to national decay. If an important community in the State were on the high road to national decay, it was certainly for the Government to seriously consider whether means should not be devised to effectively stop that tendency and organise methods whereby all the members of that community, whether low or high, whether ultimately they might turn to the work of the ploughman or the administrator, might be so trained as to fit them to contribute their full share to the total progress of the nation. The standard of the nation, both physical and mental, had not only to be maintained, but had to be strengthened, if it was to attain national efficiency and be fit for the arduous work of international life.

The Member thought that there were two important points involved in the question. One was whether it was desirable that the Government should take steps in the direction indicated, and the other was whether it was within the range of practical politics, even if desirable. That it was desirable admitted of no doubt. Perhaps the public mind had not yet risen to the occasion and realised what the effects of the system that was now being pursued were. It was the duty of the Government to make the people see where exactly they stood in the march of nations and how exactly they had to progress so that they might keep themselves abreast of others in the struggle for life. The organisation of the primary stages of a nation's training was essentially a national affair; and if primary education be made free and compulsory, the necessity for keeping it within Government control entirely would be easily seen ; and therefore the time would come, sooner than might be expected, when the whole of that department must be under Government control. As regards secondary education also, in certain of its aspects it must be controlled, as things stood at present in Travancore, by the Government agency, and the movement would have to be made by the Government agency if a satisfactory reform was to be brought about before the people did wake up to the consciousness of their want and agitate for reform. The Member added that, even if his request was regarded as an invitation towards *quasi*-social legislation, the difficulty in a Native State like Travancore, ruled over by a typical Hindu Maha Raja, was certainly not so great as in British India. Even there, the Age of Consent Act was passed in the teeth of the opposition from such great persons as Sir Romesh Chunder Mitter ; but after the Act was passed, all agitation subsided. The people submitted to it and realised that it was a beneficent measure and the wonder now was how it was possible for anybody to have raised his voice against such a wholesome piece of legislation. Coming to Native States, he said that, in Mysore, there was a law which fixed the minimum age for marriage at 12 years for girls and at 16 years for boys, and if a marriage took place before those ages, it was rendered penal.

Dewan.—The Mysore Regulation said that a girl below 11 or 12 years or a boy below 16 years shall not be married, and if such a marriage did take place, the parties were fined. It did not however cancel the legal consequences flowing from the marriage and declare that such marriage was invalid.

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Member.—It is not my province now to say how far they could have gone. But I say that legislation has been attempted and there is the law in Mysore.

Again he said that, in Jeypore, the age limit prescribed for a boy for marriage was 18 years and the marriage of any boy below that age was invalid and those who assisted in such marriage might also be punished. All that would show that the question had been tackled by other States and Governments more or less successfully and people had not been known to object to those measures of reform having come from the Government. Nevertheless, he did not ask that the Travancore Government should undertake to legislate on purely social matters. On principle he was opposed to such legislation. But it was within the province of the Government to devise such indirect means, without actually legislating, as would improve the tone of the population and ensure their thorough efficiency for the work of life, and the proposal put forward by him was one of such means. It was his conviction that a boy of 15 or 16 years, which was ordinarily the highest age of a boy in the High Schools, who was burdened with matrimony, was not likely to devote as much time to his studies as he would otherwise do.

Dewan.—Under matrimony would you include betrothal also or would you restrict it to the consummation of marriage?

The Member replied that he would include betrothal also, as it made no difference whether it was betrothal or real marriage. Betrothal caused distraction and demoralization as much as marriage in the pupil and there was also the prospective mischief of early consummation. Such a boy was not likely to devote as much time to his studies as he might be expected to devote if he were not married, especially because the curriculum of studies was becoming more and more trying. If there was along with the stiff curriculum the other disadvantage, the boy might not progress at all. Besides, the Education Department of Travancore had been very much in advance, so far as could be seen from the Education Code, even of British India. He then referred to the provisions of the Code with regard to the obligatory ceiling of all tiled school buildings and the vaccination and medical examination of school children and urged that they were all rules calculated to ensure the physical fitness of the boy and conceived entirely in the interests of his bodily health. If the Government through the Education Department could show so much solicitude for the boy's physical health, he thought that they might go one step further, both in the interests of his physical welfare and also in the interests of his moral and intellectual welfare, by declaring that, if a boy wanted admission into a Secondary School, he should be unmarried. It was a rule that ought really to be welcomed by all Hindus, because such a rule would not be new but would only be reviving the ancient rule of the Sruties and Smrities, for according to them the *Vidyarti* throughout the whole period of his tuition must remain unmarried. Even the most orthodox among the community were not likely therefore to raise any objection to the measure proposed.

As to the practicability of the rule, he said that the Central Hindu College at Benares was an example. There, the married boys were not admitted even to the College classes

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and yet the College remained one of the strongest in point of numbers. The Gurukula academy at Haridwar also successfully tried the rule. The academy was also working well in spite of the restriction. The authorities of the St. Joseph's College, Trichinopoly, had begun to experiment the rule in their hostels by prohibiting admission in them to married students.

In any case, as already stated, whatever difficulties there might be in British India, the difficulties would be less in Travancore, where the motives of the Government were not certainly likely to be misunderstood, because it was a Hindu Government, directed and controlled by a Hindu Maha Raja, and any reform calculated to effect the improvement of the Hindu subjects would not be misunderstood. He therefore requested the Government to consider whether means should not be devised as suggested, and, if, after due consultation with the departmental advisers and also such others as were capable of taking an intelligent interest in the matter, it be found that there would be no objection to the proposed measure, to take the needful action to introduce the wholesome provision in the Education Code.

Dewan.—You speak of prohibiting admission in Secondary Schools to married pupils. That also means, I suppose, that if a boy gets married after admission he will have to be expelled?

Member.—Yes, Sir. He will have to be expelled, if he marries after admission.

Dewan.—The ground upon which you put it is that it is not consistent with the boy's education that he should have this diversion. The same argument would apply to College education?

Member.—Yes, Sir. With reference to the College, there are other agencies to be consulted such as the Senate. The extension of the rule to the College classes will be a question of time only. It is unnecessary to raise those questions at present.

Dewan.—You do not propose to take in the College in your scheme now?

Member.—No, Sir, not at this stage. I shall be satisfied for the present with the Secondary Schools.

Dewan.—Probably because it is likely to involve the least opposition?

Member.—Yes, Sir, it is so. But I do contemplate a time when the rule should be extended to Collegiate education also. If the people have had time to understand its beneficial effect, they will even demand it themselves in respect of the College classes also.

Dewan.—What about the boys *now* in the Secondary Schools who are already married?

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Member.—They will have to be exempted. No human institution is perfect. A thing like that cannot be avoided.

Dewan.—This problem really does not exist for any class other than the Brahmins. Is that not so?

Member.—It exists essentially in the Brahmin community. I am told that the Syrian Christian community will also be slightly affected by it. Some Christian friends have told me that it would affect them also. I do not know how far it would. I know it will affect the Brahmin community very much indeed.

Dewan.—Will not the introduction of the rule immediately *promote* the practice of demanding *vara-sulka*?

Member.—Apparently it might. But I believe it won't seriously. The High School pupils are within 15 years now ordinarily, and in those cases where *vara-sulka* is now demanded, the boy is usually over 15.

Dewan.—The rule then, you think, will really have the effect of putting off early marriage at least by some years?

Member.—Yes; but there will be a great moral gain; it will tend to educate the public mind.

Dewan.—Dr. Bishop says that he is afraid to interfere with social custom.

Member.—There is no social custom at all that is interfered with.

Dewan.—You then put it absolutely on the ground that the school is not there to give instruction to boys who are thinking of girls. Even though the consummation does not take place, there is, I suppose, the father-in-law who tries to please the boy in a variety of ways immediately after the betrothal. All that is demoralising from an educational point of view and so you would not take in that kind of boy?

Member.—Exactly so. The Government take a paternal care of the boys in so many directions. I ask for one more solid proof of such care. Whatever inconveniences may be felt now, they will be short-lived; the people will finally feel that it was good that was done to them. You cannot have a stronger example than the controversy about the Age of Consent Bill and its acceptance by the people when passed into law.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

The Assembly adjourned at 5-25 P. M.

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